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Transform Labour! See pages 3, 5, 9

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What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
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Abbott ousted: celebrate and organise

By Riki Lane

In a swift and relatively clean execution by the Liberal Party parliamentary caucus, Tony Abbott has been ousted as Australian Prime Minister and replaced by Malcolm Turnbull.

The working class and the left have every reason to cheer at the fall of Abbott, who has led attacks on unions, the poor, refugees and asylum seekers, and stood in the way of gay marriage.

Abbot is a right wing conservative Catholic with a reactionary agenda, pro-coal, anti-renewables, climate change denier, anti-gay marriage, monarchist. He has long been a leader of the right wing, conservative wing of the Liberal Party, and panders to the racism of the far right.

Turnbull is a liberal merchant banker — pro-gay marriage, for action on climate change, republican. He is the leader of the "moderates", and distrusted by the right wing Liberals.

CLASS

However Turnbull is merely another sort of class warrior — socially progressive, intelligent, witty and a good communicator, but just as committed to attacks on working class organisation and living standards.

If anything he may be more effective for the ruling class than Abbott.

Abbott was dumped over electoral concerns; the governing coalition (Liberal-National) has been behind in the last 30 Murdoch press polls. He spoke in "three word slogans" and the government has been attacked in the (non-Murdoch) press for being dysfunctional and having no coherent message.

Their "achievements" have all been negative ones: repealing various pieces of Labour legislation (mining tax, carbon tax), ruthlessly attacking refugees and asylum seekers to "stop the boats" and establishing a Royal Commission to witch hunt trade unions.

Their first budget was a vicious attack on the working class, but they were unable to get most of it through the Senate.

On policy, Turnbull has immediately appeased the right wing, saying that he will not change the stance



Abbott and Turnbull: both warriors for their class

on issues where he clearly differs, such as gay marriage (plebiscite after the next election) or climate change. He is in lock step on the racist approach to asylum seekers.

Turnbull's main point of policy distinction is not economics; that the Liberals need to "explain" to the public why hard reforms are needed. Central in this is likely to be tax reforms: most likely regressive changes to GST (like VAT), increased rates and broadening to include health and education.

Turnbull may try to soften his agenda by including things that Abbott had ruled out, such as changes to rorts for the well off, like superannuation concessions (soon to cost more than the old age pension), negative gearing (claiming losses of property investment against other income), and capital

gains tax. Business lobbies are calling for some of these measures to get the budget back to balance.

LABOUR

Many people — not just Labor Party members — have said they are worried that it will be harder for ALP to win the next election now, as all Labor's leader Bill Shorten had to do was not be Abbott.

Turnbull is a harder target, as Shorten and the ALP right don't disagree with him on much. But that misses the point; we need to use the Liberals' desperate move to dump Abbott to reinvigorate the labour movement to organise and fight on all fronts.

There is no equivalent to Jeremy Corbyn in the ALP. There used to be Labor politicians like George Peterson, and Carlo Carli who

were openly socialist and could be relied upon to be at the demonstrations and picket lines. But they are hard to find now.

The soft left of Shorten's rival Anthony Albanese and Victoria State premier Daniel Andrews may have better practical policies that benefit working class people, but they stay entirely within the neo-liberal consensus.

• For what the Australian left is saying:
Socialist Alternative: Give me a paralysed government run by an idiot over a suave scum bucket who gets things done: bit.ly/1iuIKFg
Solidarity: Turnbull — a new salesman but the same agenda: bit.ly/1FcPI7K
John Passant (ex Socialist Alternative): bit.ly/1KxmIUY

Why mental health matters

By Daisy Thomas

Jeremy Corbyn's appointment of a Shadow Minister of Mental Health (Luciana Berger) gives us a timely reminder of how important mental health is, not only on a personal scale, but on a societal and global scale also.

One of the leading mental health issues is anxiety. Almost one person in every five is considered to be suffering from anxiety. Financial issues (including debt) are the leading contributors to the development and persistence of anxiety in day-to-day life.

Depression is also in-

creasing in prevalence. The rate is estimated at about 2.6% of the population.

Almost 10% of the population (9.7%) suffer from both anxiety and depression, creating an even greater need for community organisations, health services, workplaces, and government to work together to best support their greatest resource: the general public.

CONVERSATIONS

The new appointment of a Shadow Minister for Mental Health should help along with the important conversations about promoting mental

health and wellbeing.

By continuing to have the admittedly tough conversations about mental health, we can send the message that it is okay to seek support and advice, and put pressure on government to mobilise the resources to make that support available.

If you feel like you need to talk to someone, or if you're worried about someone in your life you call Samaritans (24/7) 08 457 90 90 90, or make an appointment to see your GP.

• Figures from *Mental Health Foundation: Living with Anxiety* report, 2014.

Conference should start to open up Labour

By Ralph Peters

The annual conference of the Labour Party takes place in Brighton from 27-30 September. It comes just two weeks after the dramatic victory of Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour leadership contest.

Over the last thirty years Labour's annual conference has become unrecognisable as a working-class political conference. And the preparation and documents of this year's event were mostly drafted before the Blairites were aware of any coming defeat.

In the official programme there are dozens of business-sponsored meetings, with (former) front bench spokespersons invited to speak. Included in the sponsors of such meetings are key agents of privatisation: ATOS, Deloitte, KPMG, G4S etc.

Chuka Umunna, still titled as the Shadow Secre-

tary of State for Business, is listed about 10 times as speaking. Chris Leslie is listed several times as speaking as "Shadow Chancellor".

The new Party leadership has not had the opportunity to pulp the inaccurate programme, never mind formulate changes to the conference's procedures.

DEBATE

But the Party conference needs to thoroughly debate the policies on which Corbyn won the election, as well as others that have so far been declared.

Until the views of the membership can be forcefully expressed by debates, policy motions and votes, Blairites within the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) will have the maximum leeway to divide the Party and undermine Corbyn.

We need to discuss nuclear disarmament, promoting workers unity,

anti-austerity and workers right in the UK and across the EU, the opening up of Britain and Europe to migrants and refugees; the crisis in the Middle East and the defeat of religious sectarianism, dictatorship and the denial of national rights to oppressed nationalities such as the Palestinians and the Kurds.

The weekend's conference won't get through this agenda. Only four motions from local Labour Parties are taken for discussion at conference, and they have to jump thorough many obstacles to make it to the conference floor.

Rule changes to increase the number of resolutions and amount of time given to have such discussions have been submitted but these will either be opposed by the right wing or prevented from going onto the agenda.

So don't expect a radically changed Party because of this conference's deliberations. For that we need to

overthrow the old procedures and make the delegates to subsequent party meetings more representative of the new Labour Party that is now forming.

DELEGATIONS

The delegations will have been decided many months ago.

So although there will be a slight shift to the left, the conference will be more of an opportunity to measure how the centre-ground of the Party has changed.

We can hope that the trade union delegations — which will not have changed hugely from earlier years — will be prepared to demand more from the Party.

Before we can get real change we need to organise the left of the Party throughout the country. We need to get campaigning and debating, renovating the Party organisations with the new recruits and the new enthusiasm.

But most of all we need to discuss how we can defeat this government

now and replace it with a workers' government as soon as possible.



Labour Young Socialists set up

Over 130 young leftwing Labour members rallied in London on 20 September to launch Labour Young Socialists, a united youth organisation of the grassroots left in Labour. Attendees debated the way forward for the Labour left movement that has sprung up around Corbyn, and discussed how to build local Young Labour groups as campaigning, educational bodies at constituency level, and how to win the argument in CLPs and Labour Clubs for socialism.

www.facebook.com/LabourYoungSocialists

Student strike to save maintenance grants

By Callum Cant

The National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) is calling on the UK student movement to start mobilising for a student strike in 2016.

When Osborne announced the conversion of maintenance grants to loans in the emergency budget, elements of the student movement knew we were in for a big fight.

NCAFC had, as it is increasingly doing, taken the initiative and called a national demonstration for the 4 November before the budget even took place, after the NUS failed to do so. This forms the first part of the strategy for the autumn term.

But ever since winter conference 2014 NCAFC policy has been to pursue a strike strategy, in the recognition that an endless cycle of isolated demonstrations and occupations has the potential to lead to serial defeat and demobilisation.

This summer, that policy has gone from being a relatively empty statement of ideals to a worked out plan, because we recognise that nothing less than a serious escalation in the student movement will put us in a

position to win.

The rationale is that the next upsurge in student anger needs to be given a mass democratic means of expression that can seriously challenge the Tories, and begin to win serious concessions from them.

The specifics of the strike demands are still in discussion, but we know that the overriding focus will be on student maintenance funding. This will be, basically, a strike demanding students have enough to live on. The primary demand will be the reversal of the proposed change from grants to loans.

DEMANDS

There will be distinct sets of demands for each nation balloted, in order to account for different funding models across devolved systems.

NCAFC is proposing that we use the NUS's democratic processes to call a national strike ballot of all members. This requires 30 Students Unions to endorse the call for a ballot. Once that target is hit, the procedures for a ballot of every student union that is a member of the NUS get underway.

The ballot will consist of

referendums or general assemblies in every union. This means that the potential voter pool is as big as 7 million students.

We will need to run a national "yes" campaign — probably against the entrenched right wing bureaucrats within the NUS who are opposing the rising left tide and have already proved themselves willing to flagrantly break democratic mandates.

This campaign will have to come from the bottom up, from what left already exists on campuses and in unions and whatever structures we can build between now and the ballot.

The hope is that the ballot period will end before mid December, and the strike itself — assuming we win the ballot — will take pace in early February.

It's hard to predict what a strike would look like exactly, but we can guess.

Mass pickets, faculty occupations and regional demonstrations would seem like obvious forms of action. It's also likely that students would meet in general assemblies to discuss and make decisions about the direction of the strike and the movement more generally.

What does this mean for the revolutionary student left?

A strike is a very different kind of action to a demonstration or occupation, primarily because it is based on the premise of democratic mass participation.

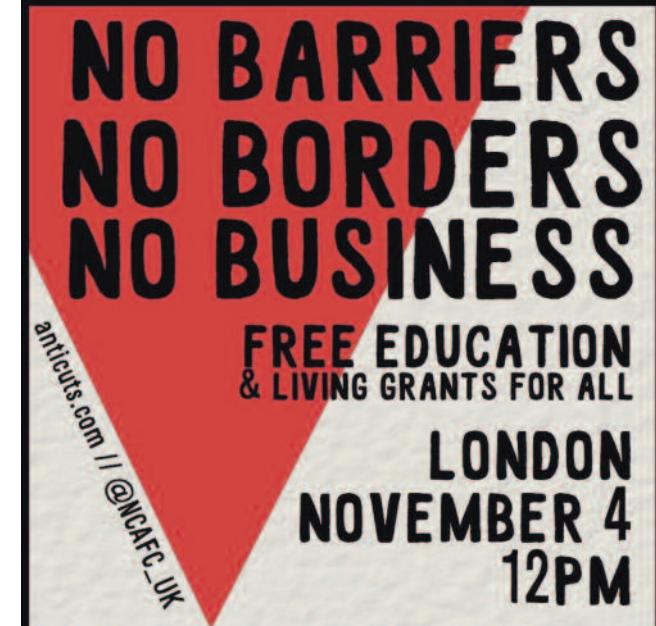
If we accept that the experience of struggle develops political consciousness, then this process of calling, balloting for and potentially carrying out a student strike is a huge opportunity to get students thinking and acting politically.

STRIKE

The strike strategy is a huge chance to continue developing an ideological counter-hegemony amongst the student population, and change the political common sense.

But alongside this, it is also a moment to build infrastructure that can sustain a movement after its first buzz of momentum has passed.

Student activism in 2010 gave us organisations like the NCAFC that have helped support and develop the student movement in the years since — we need to repeat this kind of creation, and do it better, so that the movement in the



UK grows in strength and durability.

And finally, a student strike is a confrontation with the state. It might not be a confrontation that we can be instantly confident of winning, but it moves our action from produce direct action towards building a collective power relationship with the Tories, and fighting together to fundamentally change society.

Soon we will have the model student union motion prepared — at which point every activist group

that supports the strike, and every union with favourable left wing officers, should start trying to pass it and reach the target of 30 SUs.

We also need to start a mass discussion about the strike strategy, and politically educate a whole layer of activists so that they are empowered to take the idea of the strike into their local contexts and spread the idea there.

• Updates at anticuts.com

Help us raise £15,000

In the past few years Workers' Liberty has published an impressive range of books.

The development of digital printing technology means we are able to produce books more easily, and cheaper, than in the past.

This allows us to publish more in-depth material, theoretical studies, and books about our movement's history. As comrades will be aware we have just published the second volume of *The Fate of the Russian Revolution, The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism*.

The ideas contained within these books are not useful left on the pages. We need to make an effort to sell the books to people around us, run stalls with our books on, ask local libraries and universities to take our books, ask local bookshops to stock our books and run reading and discussion groups on the books.

But the books don't pay for themselves. We need to make a collective effort to sell our books in order not only to pay for the current book, but to enable us to print more and different books in the future.

If you are interested in joining a reading group for *The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism* see details of groups on our blog: thetwotrotskyisms.org

Please also consider:

- Getting a subscription to our weekly newspaper, Solidarity — workersliberty.org/subscribe
- Taking out a monthly standing order.
- Making a one-off donation
- Organising a fundraising event in your local area
- Committing to do a sponsored activity and asking others to sponsor you
- Buying some of our books, posters, autocollants or pamphlets

For information on standing orders or how to donate visit workersliberty.org/donate For more ideas and information on fundraising visit workersliberty.org/fundraising

Thanks this week to Sandra, and to comrades who sent in extra sales money. So far we have raised £10,465.

A letter to Charlie Kimber

The Left



Dear Charlie Kimber (National Secretary, Socialist Workers Party),

I am responding to your "Letter to a Jeremy Corbyn supporter" (8 September*), and subsequent statements by your organisation in which you basically tell "the tens of thousands of people who cheered Jeremy at his rallies [who] are a sign of the potential for a mass movement against austerity" that they are wasting their time.

You say, the Labour Party leadership are so right wing and the unions will only back Corbyn if he can win the next election so there is, "no point spending four years striving to get Corbyn into office just to see him destroyed."

I don't share your analysis. While not destroying them, the effect of Corbyn's campaign has been a disaster for the Parliamentary Labour Party and the trade union leaderships who have worked hard to maintain the wall between what Labour does politically and the rest of the labour movement.

Yes, his candidacy was a fluke and the Labour Party left is woefully unprepared for the fight against the right, both inside and outside the party. It is an indication of the weakness of the whole left over decades, but we have to start from where we are and make the most of this chance.

Even in your worst case scenario, where Corbyn is "destroyed" in four years time, the revolutionaries in the Labour Party will still have been struggling alongside hundreds of thousands of others for that period. People can learn from defeat as much as from victory; but to learn from either revolutionaries need to go through the struggle and having done so will get a much more receptive hearing than if you are one

of those revolutionaries who remained on the sidelines as a spectator.

There is then the possibility of raising the movement to a higher political level but only if there are enough revolutionaries trying to spread that message.

For all your talk about the undoubtedly necessity for struggle you back away from the political struggle within the Labour Party to move it to the left. "The real danger is that Corbyn supporters are plunged into internal party struggles..." Except that this lack of internal party struggle is precisely what has made the Labour Party the top-down neo-liberal supporting organisation it is today.

The struggle inside the party can be a part of the more general struggle to rouse our class against the Tories. If "...resistance... [is] ... the best route towards political radicalisation", why doesn't that apply inside the structures of the hundreds of thousands strong Labour Party as well?

Your dismissal of the need for internal party struggles illustrates the operational mindset of the SWP's leadership who can just tell the membership what to do without having to "waste" all that time on debate and democracy. Happily there are Corbyn supporters who understand that a healthy political organisation cannot be built by decree or decide what to do in the "... struggles at work and in working class areas" by diktat.

Socialists should be encouraging Corbyn's supporters to flood into the Labour Party, get organised and tear down the wall before the Parliamentary Party has time to rebuild it.

You say, "We should all support [Corbyn] against the Labour right"; if you're serious about that, then join the Party and encourage your members and supporters to do the same.

Bob Anthony

* bit.ly/1KxtHMK

Analysing the Corbyn surge

Letter



Sean Matgamna writes in Solidarity 367 that Corbyn's victory was the second time since 2010 that the unions have asserted themselves inside the Labour Party. Sean says the first time was when the unions got Ed Miliband elected to Party leader after the 2010 election defeat.

If this is asserting themselves, it is assertion-lite. The striking parallel between the election of Miliband and Corbyn is that the unions waited until the candidates appeared and then declared a preference from the list of candidates they were presented with. They weren't scurrying around to find a union candidate to front up and fight for their interests inside the Party.

Some of the unions don't seem to be stable Corbyn allies. It is worth noting that fact because the implication is that a fight in the unions should flank a fight in the Party.

In fact the creation of a rather peculiar leadership election mechanism seems to have allowed a rather disparate movement of various radical strands, which existed outside the Party as well as inside, to fuel Corbyn's campaign. The movement went round the Party structures, as well as through them. Good for all that.

In the same paper Martin Thomas claims to have underestimated an insurgent movement inside the Labour Party whose existence he dates from 2010. Martin's evidence for the existence of a burgeoning left inside Labour is that Party conferences became more lively.

There is an alternative explanation for a "more lively conference" (accepting for a moment that they actually did perk up): that the Labour leadership didn't care too much what happened on conference floor; the need to carve them up eased somewhat.

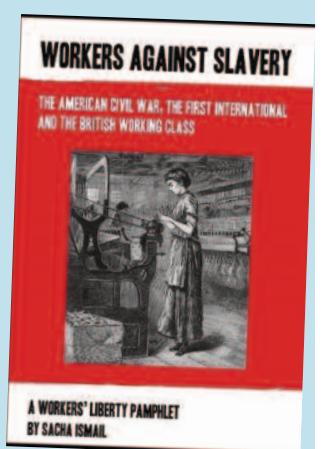
I put to you that a striking thing about Labour over the past five years is not that a dissenting wing began to emerge — but exactly the opposite, that there have been very few signs of a dissenting wing emerging. And that is surprising because the impetus behind Corbyn is in good part the disillusionment with capitalism amongst a significant minority

created in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis. Radicals have been looking for a vehicle that will express their views. We saw that trend, for example, in the Green vote. But there was very little to see — at least clearly and overtly — inside the Labour Party before the recent explosion and an amazing Corbyn victory. Party membership, for example, picked up after the 2010 election defeat but then remained around 190,000 for the next four or five years. In the last couple of years — especially — we've seen people drawing leftist conclusions across Europe and beyond. Syriza and Podemos, and even Bernie Sanders in the US, are visible signs of this turn in popular opinion. But people weren't joining Labour here.

Good that they have now, but no need to re-write the past.

Mark Osborn, south London

A pamphlet looking at the stand taken by British workers against slavery during the US Civil War



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March against the Tories!

The *Daily Mail's* serialisation of Michael Ashcroft's unauthorised "revenge biography" of David Cameron, with its revelations of "posh debauchery" by the future Prime Minister and his friends when at Oxford University and continuing into later life, were, depending on your point of view, amusing, or further proof of the vileness of the ruling class.

Unfortunately the "Chipping Snorton set" (as the *Daily Mail* put it) kept a much more serious story off the front pages of the papers. This was how Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge had been downgraded by the Care Quality Commission. It has gone from being a top ranking hospital to being an inadequate one, and it has been taken into "special measures".

But the story highlights how the government is destroying the entire NHS.

According to Polly Toynbee (*Guardian* 22 September), Addenbrooke's is routinely over-run with emergency patients and that has proved its undoing as far as the CQC is concerned. It is just not coping with increasing numbers.

But the three major problems the hospital faces are not unique to Addenbrooke's. These are cuts, cuts, and cuts.

First, cuts in social care means beds are taken up by frail and elderly patients. And of course there are not enough beds.

Second, cuts in nursing training and the blocking of visas for non-EU nurses means there are not enough staff. And because the local Trust relies on agency staff to cover itself, costs have spiralled and it has found itself with huge debts.

Third, the money the Trust gets from the government does not match the needs of the population. Overall, NHS England has calculated it is £22 billion short of what it needs.

The problems in Cambridge — staff shortages and spiralling debts — are very similar to those at Barts Health NHS Trust (the biggest in the country) which has also been placed in special measures. Except Barts, like many other NHS Trusts, was also saddled with impossibly high repayments on a PFI scheme.

Last year all NHS organisations (hospitals, mental health trusts, community providers and ambulances combined) ended up £800 million in deficit. Meanwhile the NHS is being told to make £22 billion in "efficiency savings".

The new leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, has said we need to "remove the PFI burden from the NHS – this really was our mess, and we have to clear it up". Absolutely right. In fact Labour should make campaigning for the NHS central to its political opposition to the Tories.

For 60 years the NHS has been a beacon of solidarity. Over the last thirty years — as David Cameron's class systemati-

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cally destroyed the welfare state, cut benefits, social services and made young people pay to get a higher education — it has survived. Because it survived it has done a lot to keep alive the ideas of equality and humanity in the face of the cruelty and ruthlessness of neo-liberal capitalist orthodoxy.

But the NHS may not survive five more years, the years until the next election.

The fight to save the NHS and to restore everything was have lost over the last thirty years must start now. We need groups of Corbyn supporters to organise into activist groups to transform local Labour Parties and to organise to stop cuts in local areas. We need trade union activists to push for their unions to raise the political pressure inside Labour.

As part of building and consolidating local groups and campaigns we need the biggest possible mobilisation on 4 October outside Tory party conference in Manchester.

That protest needs to have clear, socialist demands:
 Tax the rich harder. Nationalise the banks and big financial institutions to create a public banking system;

Scrap PFI. Rebuild the NHS as a public service. Run this and all services under democratic workers' and community control.

Army general threatens all means "fair or foul"

Just eight days into Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party leadership, and four and a half years before the next general election, a serving army general has already threatened a mutiny against a Corbyn Labour government.

"The Army just wouldn't stand for it", the un-named general told the *Sunday Times* on 20 September. "The general staff would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and I think people would use whatever means possible, fair or foul, to prevent that. You can't put a maverick in charge of a country's security."

"There would be mass resignations at all levels and you would face the very real prospect of an event which would effectively be a mutiny".

The *Daily Mail* also puffed the threat.

Right-wing Tory MEP Daniel Hannan described the general as an "idiot". The Ministry of Defence effectively conceded that the quote was genuine, and said it was unacceptable for a serving officer to make such political comments.

But the ministry refused to inquire into which general had

made the mutiny threat, on the grounds that with over a hundred serving generals it would be too difficult to find which one had spoken.

As if a military coup threat were so small a thing that it's not worth investigating even when the suspects are already narrowed down to a hundred or so.

This sort of thing has happened before. In 1980, army chief of staff Michael Carver admitted in a debate that in February 1974, when a very moderate Labour government ousted the Tories in an election amidst high class struggle: "Fairly senior officers were ill-advised enough to make suggestions that perhaps, if things got terribly bad, the army would have to do something about it".

In March 1914, army officers at the Curragh camp, the main British military base in what was then British-ruled Ireland, declared they would refuse orders to move against armed Protestant-Unionists who might defy and obstruct the law granting Home Rule to Ireland then about to pass through the British parliament.

In July 1912, Tory leader Andrew Bonar Law, leading a

campaign against the Home Rule Bill, had already declared: "There are things stronger than parliamentary majorities".

The Liberal government which was passing the Home Rule Bill retreated, saying that orders transmitted to the Curragh had been garbled. The armed forces' chief of staff, and not the mutineers, was forced to resign. The Home Rule Act became law on 18 September; but the government gladly shelved it on grounds of the First World War which had broken out in August, and the 1914 Act was never implemented.

For now, the threat of military mutiny is a ploy to undermine Jeremy Corbyn, to foster panic, to nurture right-wing Labour revolts against Corbyn, and to lay the basis for "softer" sabotage of a Corbyn Labour government (use of the House of Lords and the monarchy and courts, bureaucratic obstruction, economic sabotage, etc.)

But, in the longer term, it is a real threat. The answer? There are things strong than military mutinies, too. Like mass working-class mobilisation, democratic workers' self-defence, and democratic organisation of the rank and file in the army to check the hierarchy.



Syrian refugees face Hungary's border fence

Has the UK's failure to bomb Syria fuelled the refugee crisis?

The increasing numbers of refugees now making their way to Europe from Syria has led some to argue that this crisis makes a retrospective case for Britain bombing Syria.

The editor of *Left Foot Forward*, James Bloodworth, has argued that in an article in the *International Business Times*.

The situation in Syria has seen a multitude of rebel groups and militias, mostly made up of Sunni Arabs, go to war against the forces of Syria's Assad regime, the Lebanese militia Hezbollah, and Iranian backed Shia forces. The Kurds and other non-Arab and non-Alawite minorities have also been fighting.

The initially peaceful and democratic anti-Assad movement did not have a political leadership capable of stopping that fragmentation on religious and ethnic lines as the rebellion was militarised. Thus there was no simple solution to prevent the breakup of the state, or to end the Assad dictatorship of Assad with minimal violence and replace it with something the left could say was better.

The claim by Bloodworth and other commentators that the bombing of Syria in 2013 (or for some, better arming of rebels in 2012) would have prevented this situation seems extremely short sighted.

In August 2013 the UK Government lost a motion to begin airstrikes in Syria. Whilst we did not cheer like the Stop the War Coalition who celebrated the vote as if the lives of millions of Syrians had been improved, we did not and do not call on the British government to bomb Syria.

We remain opponents of Assad and recognise that the bombing campaigns he has waged have killed far more than any militia, including Daesh. But his immediate overthrow would leave Syria controlled by forces of reaction, split firmly on sectarian lines.

How would these airstrikes have prevented refugees from fleeing? Many of them are leaving the violence of both the

Assad state and the militias, particularly Daesh.

A bombing effort would probably not have even been decisive in the conflict. Bombing by the UK would likely have been a token effort to show that action was being taken against Assad and to bolster the UK's prestige as a power that does not "stand idly by". We cannot endorse a bombing campaign whose actual aim and likely "best" result would be to boost the UK's relationship with the Gulf states or back the military might of the USA.

Bombing would also probably have provoked a larger mobilisation by Russian forces and an increase in the use of their intelligence and logistics capabilities should military installations come under attack.

Others have argued that earlier support for Syrian's mainstream rebels in the Free Syrian Army back in 2012 would have helped to build a more moderate and powerful unified opposition to Assad and could have prevented the rise of Daesh.

Even at the beginning of the conflict the FSA was divided. Early in the conflict there were clear divisions between the so called "hotel revolutionaries" who took part in negotiations (often from hotels in Turkey) and those fighting on the ground fighting. The Kurdish forces who were carved out by Arab chauvinists. There were large defections to coalitions like the Islamic Front and even Daesh from previously loyal battalions of the FSA.

Forces might have changed ideology with the promise of greater weaponry and arms from the US and UK? But then an alternative offer from other backers, including individuals in the Gulf states who have funded the ultra-Islamists, could have changed their minds again.

Especially as the conditions imposed by Western powers on the rebels seeking arms would — if the aid were to improve politics — have to have been stricter than those demanded by Gulf states.

After Greece's election

By Theodora Polenta

In Greece's parliamentary election of 20 September, Syriza received 35.46%, almost the same in percentage terms as January's 36.3%.

Syriza has maintained its coalition government with the right wing nationalists of Ane (Independent Greeks).

In absolute terms the party lost 320,000 votes. New Democracy won 28%, almost the same as January's 27.8%, but it lost nearly 200,000 votes.

Many more people abstained this time round. In January 37% did not vote. This time it was 43.5%. Of those who went to the polling stations, 2.5% cast a blank vote. This shows the depth of disappointment among a wide layer of the electorate.

In May 2012 abstention was at 34.9%. Before the memorandum years, abstention was below 30%. In 2004 it was 23.5%. In the 20 September 2015 election, two million fewer people voted than in 2004.

Those parties who voted in favour of the new Memorandum on 20 July lost a total of 1.1 million votes.

To the left of Syriza, neither the KKE, nor the new Popular Unity party made a breakthrough. The KKE won 5.5% of the vote, exactly the same percentage as in January, but in absolute terms they lost 37,000, and they are down 2% on their vote before Greece's long crisis erupted, in 2009.

The Popular Unity party, formed out of the left wing of Syriza, with 25 MPs, won 155,000 votes, only 2.86%. It was 11,000 votes short of crossing the 3% threshold for proportional representation and therefore gets no MPs.

Antarsya won 0.85% of the vote, a bit up from 0.36% in 2009 but still at the margins of the political process in Greece. In January they won 0.64%.

The parties of the anti-memorandum Left, the parties that attempted to political express the movement of the "oxi" (no) to austerity in the 5 July 2015 referendum failed to fill the void left by the mutation of the leadership of Syriza.

The result is a house of parliament with six

memorandum parties plus the Nazi party of Golden Dawn. The only political expression of the left is KKE. KKE devoted the bulk of its political electioneering to a campaign against Popular Unity, indicting it as representing "drachma capitalism".

This elections politically signify the end of an historical era of Syriza as a multi-tendency party of the radical left which can be traced back to the Space for Dialogue for the Unity and Common Action of the Left in 2001.

The Syriza of social forums, community rank and file movements, anti-memorandum struggles, the square movements, the re-invigoration of the trade union movement, no longer exists.

The new balance between the ND and Syriza has some common characteristics with, but also major differences from, the two-party system of Pasok and ND in the past. The two largest parties, Syriza and New Democracy had between them, in this election, 3.45 million voters. In, for example, the March 2004 elections, Pasok and ND had between them 6.36 million votes and 86%. Even in the 2009 elections, which were the swan song of the "old" two-party system, Pasok and ND gathered 5.3 million votes. Weaker support will make the new coalition government unstable.

GOLDEN DAWN

Golden Dawn has been established as the third party in a third consecutive election since the European elections in 2014.

It increased its percentage by 0.6%, although its actual votes were down by about 10,000 nationwide. In large urban centres (Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki), Golden Dawn shows stagnation in rates but lower votes in absolute terms.

These Nazis are, however, becoming a constant counter-revolutionary factor in political life. Their vote even doubled in the islands where the wave of migrants came this past summer. The Nazis have consolidated their third place despite the start of the trial for the majority of the Golden Dawn leadership (including its president and vice-president), on accusations of the formation of a



Golden Dawn has consolidated themselves as the third party in parliament

ction, rebuild the social resistance



The Greek people had a lot of international support. We still need a Europe-wide campaign against austerity

criminal organization, and despite the fact that the leader of Golden Dawn two days before the elections admitted political responsibility for the murder of the left-wing anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas. This must be dealt with the required seriousness, by the left and the organized labour movement; on all fronts, political, ideological organisational.

The 155,000 votes and 2.86% for Popular Unity are far below the initial estimates of its leadership and below the objective possibilities.

Lack of time to establish the new party before the election is one explanation. But it would be wrong to see that as the main factor. Popular Unity fell far short of its intention to create a united political front to represent the referendum "oxi", though its central slogan was: "Oxi has not been defeated; the struggle continues". It fell short despite reaching out to the revolutionary left outside Syriza, and despite the fact that it included very prominent ex-Syriza people such as Zoe Konstantopoulou, who was the president of parliament, Costas Lapavitsas, Nandia Valavani, etc.

Popular Unity was unable to shake off the characterisation of it as the "drachma party" and the advocate of "a currency road to socialism". And many of its leaders, Lafazanis,

Stratoulis, Hsyxos, etc. were part till recently of the Syriza-Anel cabinet, and did not raise any audible public voice against the decision of the Syriza's leadership to form a coalition with Anel, against Syriza's support for a right-winger as president of Greece, or against the 20 February pre-agreement which was the prelude to the 12 July surrender.

AMICABLE DIVORCE

At one point the majority of the Syriza Central Committee was against Tsipras, the Political Secretariat was against, the youth wing of the party was against, Syriza's trade union cadres were against.

Had Syriza Left Platform leader Lafazanis wanted to, he could have launched a battle to take Syriza, to win a majority which was there for the taking. But he preferred to go for an "amicable divorce", as some have put it. He thus handed Syriza over to Tsipras.

Again, Antarsya-EEK was unable to express the world of working class society and movements.

Antarsya-EEK called on the people to vote solely for a combative workers' and popular opposition. EEK fought in an electoral bloc with Antarsya, on the basis of a transitional program for an end to austerity, for a break with the EU, the abolition of the debt, nation-

alizations of the banks and the strategic sectors of the economy under workers control etc., but insisting on a struggle for workers' power and a socialist unification of Europe.

Many people see Antarsya-EEK as militant organisations useful for the everyday struggles but not yet as an alternative to power. In trade union and student elections Antarsya's percentages are noticeably higher.

While the majority for the parties of the Memorandum in parliament may seem overwhelming, it is clear that the social majority of working-class people who voted for Syriza did not vote for the enforcement of Enfia (property tax), auctioning-off of houses, selling-off of public property, collective redundancies, cuts in wages and pensions. Now the role of Parliament will be just implementing Memorandum laws and further the de-legitimisation of the whole of the political system.

What Syriza succeeded, by turning the referendum no into a yes, is expelling from parliament in the true sense any working-class representation. We have to wait for the precise details of the demography of the abstention, but the first impression is that many of the most progressive sections of the poor and young people who had voted massively no in the referendum turned away from the

polls.

This means that the political battle around the memoranda has to be transferred to the streets.

The Greek people looked, first of all, at the question of what kind of government, not just an opposition force, could stop the ongoing catastrophe. And it has chosen, without much enthusiasm nor great expectations, the lesser evil, the Syriza of Tsipras, to avoid a full revanchist restoration of the discredited old corrupt regime of the right wing New Democracy. The new administration will be a weak government tied to the orders of the financial oligarchy, the Troika, the international and Greek ruling class, to implement the most savage austerity program on a devastated people, in conditions of a worsening world capitalist crisis.

What is necessary is to conduct systematic preparation for the new and major class struggles that lie ahead. This must be done through a sincere evaluation and analysis of the reasons for the defeat and through the necessary political redirection that flows from this. A fundamental aspect for this will be to elaborate, defend and circulate widely an anti-capitalist and socialist programme, rejecting reformist illusions or "panaceas" of capitalist management. In this way, we will decisively confront the disappointment and remove the political confusion that exists today within the working class, the youth and the poor layers of society.

Challenges lie ahead of us: The building and reinvigoration of the labour movement and of community movements of resistance. A stronger anti-capitalist front. A broad socio-political front that will defy the policies of Memoranda and national and international capital. A mass revolutionary force aiming for a workers' government which can put a definitive end to the dictatorship of the markets and capital.

With "invisible" refugee infants and children slipping out of the hands of their uprooted parents to be washed out dead in the Greek beaches, with the extreme capitalism of the Memoranda, and democratic deficiencies sleepwalking again towards fascism, "the time are out of joint".

We need new structures, new shapes and new ways of thinking to concretise and organise the seething anger and despair. Otherwise this rage will become individualistic, dark and racist; looking for scapegoats at refugees and for salvation to fascists and charlatans.

The black is not yet, and should not be, the most likely scenario. The red is. Those who exchanged freedom for security will realize once again that they end up losing both freedom and security.

Oxi! We will not surrender.

We want to live.

Yes, Greece can get out of the swamp of Memoranda!

Politics is in the streets.

And as Oscar Wilde said: "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

A long split on the French left

The "Lambertist" strand of "orthodox Trotskyism" is almost unknown in Britain, but has been relatively strong in France for many decades, and with many international offshoots. A recent split among the "Lambertists" is thus of interest to all activists who seek, as we must, to unravel what of today's would-be "Trotskyism" is authentic treasure gleaned from the great revolutionaries of the past, and what is corruption and degeneration.

The "Lambertists" have in recent years been organised in a group called the Independent Workers' Party (POI). The POI purports to contain four distinct organised "tendencies": the CCI (Trotskyist), and "anarchist", "Communist", and "Socialist" tendencies. In fact it is run by the CCI, the other three "tendencies" being concocted facades.

The POI has been intensely hostile to the European Union, and claims that exit from the European Union is the socialist priority. It is very influential in one of France's big trade-union confederations, FO, and is said to number hundreds of FO full-time officials among its members.

This is an abridged translation of a survey by Vincent Présumey.

By Vincent Présumey

As far as can be seen, the crisis in the CCI/POI (the CCI being the successor to the OCI of the years 1960-80, and the main component of the POI) is coming to a head...

The crisis erupted at the start of the summer, at the time of the Greek referendum [5 July], and seems to be culminating now, as the holiday season ends, with what both sides expected: a split, and not a friendly one.

The appearance on 18 July of a new paper, *La Tribune des Travailleurs* (Workers' Tribune), clearly signalled a split. We observed that the political orientation of that paper was clearer, more assertive, than that of *Informations Ouvrières* [the POI paper], where Daniel Gluckstein [main leader of the CCI/POI for many years] is still the nominal editor but seems no longer to have any grip over the content. It was more assertive in the direction of preparation for social, and thus political confrontation in France, thought of as imminent.

It was so because it took the gloves off in relation to the leadership of the union confederations [France has, in effect, several "TUC"s]. It attacks them, among other questions, on that of the European Trade Union Confederation, a structure which is more linked to official EU institutions than to the rank and file of the unions, and which is holding its congress in Paris at the end of September and the start of October. The CGT, CGT-FO, CFDT, CFTC, and UNSA [the five major "TUC"s] are affiliated to it.

The new paper was sponsored by the national secretaries of the POI. In an article signed by them (Daniel Gluckstein, Gérard Schivardi and Jean Markun) it claimed to represent the aims for which the POI was founded, and took the same masthead slogans as *Informations Ouvrières* [the official POI paper]: open forum of the class struggle, "the emancipation of the workers will be the task of the workers themselves"...

For those who launched the new paper, it registered that they felt it impossible to express themselves only, or, now, even mainly, internally. The majority of the DN (National Leadership, formerly Central Committee) of the CCI had decided to schedule the CCI congress after the POI congress (rather than vice versa, as previously) and to declare that a fundamental renovation of the POI was going to be carried through at the congress.

The minority wanted officially to form a tendency. That right was refused them on the grounds that the CCI congress had been put back, and tendencies cannot exist outside pre-congress periods. This clash led to the "suspension" of the members of the minority tendency, more or less a third of the organisation, the changing of the keys of the offices, and similar measures.

It was that minority tendency that launched the new paper, but it did not proclaim that openly. That was wrong: transparency is the foundation of democracy, but they were still at the stage when both factions played the game of "no leaks".

The minority reckoned that the ban on them organising internally called for such a move, but did not say so, since it knew it still had some organisational leverage (shares in the legal entity holding the property of the organisation, posi-



The would-be Trotskyist POI is deeply embedded in the machinery of the FO union confederation, with hundreds of its activists having jobs as full-time union officials. That embedding has now led to a split with a minority around Daniel Gluckstein, previously for many years the chief political leader of the POI.

tions in the editing of *Informations Ouvrières* and in the POI secretariat).

On 24 July, the three national secretaries published an "open letter" to the members of the national committee of the POI justifying the creation of a new paper. In particular, they said that *Informations Ouvrières* had become an "organ of one part of the national committee which has gone to war against another part of the committee", and accused it of saying nothing about the shared position of the European Trade Union Confederation and the "leadership of the [French] national union confederations" in favour of keeping Greece in the eurozone and the EU and of giving poor coverage to a call by local councillors for the repeal of the new local government law of 2015 [transferring power from departments and municipalities to regions].

This letter immediately brought a public reply from a member of the national committee reproaching the members of the secretariat for their indiscipline and individual behaviour, and saying that no differences could be seen from reading the two rival papers.

Informations Ouvrières of 20 August saw an important event, but without sequel. An "open forum" page appeared with two articles by well-known members of the oppositional tendency, Pierre Cize and Jean-Jacques Marie. Marie is well-known as a historian of the labour movement and of the USSR...

EUROPE

Jean-Jacques Marie's article, for the first and it seems the last time, really set the fur flying in the columns of *Informations Ouvrières*. All credit to him for that.

His subject was the European Trade Union Confederation. His substance was supplied by a criticism of a very obscure phrase of [POI leader] Marc Gauquelin's, in a previous issue, about the pressures of the EU institutions on the "radical left". The real obstacle, or the main obstacle, explained Marie, is the leaderships of the trade-union organisations linked to the ETUC. Their political role is bigger than that of the "radical left", though that too has its share of responsibility...

On Saturday 29 August the CCI held one of its traditional rallies at the tomb [in Paris] of Leon Trotsky's son Leon Sedov. This year the rally was special, because it was there that, so to speak, war was declared openly. According to the leadership of the CCI there were "almost 500" there. The two speeches, by Marc Gauquelin and by Lucien Gauthier, were both entirely oriented towards a definitive split — not with a current which had differences but with out-and-out enemies — and towards self-proclamation...

In fact, Marc Gauquelin, on that 29 August, openly declared himself a Lambertist [after the old leader of the POI, Pierre Lambert, who died in 2008], without quotation marks. The cult of the father of the tendency was in full flow against the contrariness and perversity of those who would contradict it: Marx-Engels-Lenin-Trotsky-Lambert, that was it.

In these two speeches, we learned some new things on the history of Bolshevism. We had already been told that Bolshevik

vism tolerates tendencies only when the leadership declares a pre-congress discussion period. That grossly contradicts the historical facts, since there were always different tendencies in the Russian socialist movement from 1899 to 1921, and Bolshevism was first one of those tendencies and then itself full of diverse tendencies.

In the speeches we learned that the split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks [in 1903] had been mainly about the payment of dues, whereas in fact both Martov's and Lenin's versions of the clause in the party rules defining members (the original subject of dispute between them [at the 1903 congress]) declared that members must "support the party materially".

Then we learned that the Mensheviks had immediately... [after the congress] launched a "new Iskra against the party's paper" (Lucien Gauthier) [Iskra was the Russian socialists' central publication at the time]. In fact, the Mensheviks took control of *Iskra* [after the congress] thanks to Plekhanov [a supporter of Lenin at the congress] who let down Lenin.

These jugglings with historical truth were aimed at justifying an equation between three cosmic events: the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, the 1952 split of [French] Trotskyism [in which the "Lambertists" separated from the majority of the international "Orthodox Trotskyism" led by Pablo and Mandell], and the current split in the CCI/POI. Each time the good side was the majority (in Russia: Bolshevik!) And even back in 1903 the Mensheviks [they claimed] didn't want to pay their dues! So, in launching a competitor paper, the Mensheviks of today are flouting majority rule and "democratic centralism" and will undermine the subscriptions to *Informations Ouvrières*, which comes to the same thing as not paying dues!

It is only a slight caricature to summarise these profound thoughts thus: Marxism-Leninism-Trotskyism-Lambertism is selling the paper and paying your dues. Mensheviks, Pabloites [supporters of the "orthodox Trotskyist" majority in the early 1950s], and Seldjoukites do not want to pay their dues. That is counter-revolution! ...

All this rigmarole on Menshevism, Pabloism, and paying dues... has as its cornerstone this eternal truth: the unions, boys, we must defend them top to bottom, "whatever the policies of their leaderships"...

The author's views, his experience, and his familiarity with this current mean that he cannot equate the two sides in this split. One side is establishing a self-proclaimed post-mortem Lambertist identity covering up a dogma on the infallible essence of the trade unions "whatever the policies of their leaderships". In it there are some perfectly sincere activists and good trade-unionists, but it is a framework whose social function is to sterilise them.

The others are being led by their choices and by the facts to pose themselves questions and to try to act as revolutionaries whose hands will not be tied by the trade-union machines. That makes possible a break with part of their heritage in order to better vivify another part of it. Not inevitable, but possible.

Build a Labour youth movement!

By Martin Thomas

Since the late 1980s, the Labour Party has had only a token youth movement. Yet throughout working-class history, the energy of younger activists has always been the first essential for a dynamic labour movement.

History suggests that the new Labour leaders could more or less at will transform Young Labour into a lively movement. They should change the rules to give a democratic breath of life to Young Labour, and openly campaign to build it. Even if the leaders drag their feet, there will be local openings now for building lively constituency Young Labour groups.

As Michelle Webb reported in a history of Labour youth movements a few years ago, Labour Youth Leagues were first launched by a London Labour women's conference in 1919. The idea then was not a political force, but more a safe place to park older labour movement children. The "children" were to be provided with "rambles and picnics" and "taught Labour songs".

It was never like that. As soon as the Youth Leagues were officially recognised at the Labour Party conference in 1924, successful pressure mounted to lift the upper age limit to 25. The Youth Leagues wanted to make sure that their active and confident members were not disbarred before they had reached their stride. They constantly complained against, and often in local practice defied, the official instruction that Youth Leagues were not to debate politics and generally "not to overemphasise the political side" at all.

AGE

Age limits would be controversial again and again. By 1933 the left was pressing, unsuccessfully, for the limit to be raised to 30. When the Labour leadership moved to shut down the first Labour youth movement, from 1936, it reduced the age limit, in stages, to 21.

In 1948 a more confident Labour leadership conceded to left-wing pressure to raise the limit back to 25. Others wanted 30. In the late 1980s, when the Labour leadership was shutting down the fourth of its youth movements, it reduced the limit to 21 again. It is now 27.

The Youth Leagues were allowed a national conference in 1929, and the right for youth delegates to vote on constituency Labour Party General Committees in 1931. They grew fairly rapidly in the 1930s. By 1935 there were 510 local Youth Leagues, though only 135 were at their 1935 conference.

Stalinists, led by Ted Willis, later to be the author of the famous (pro-police) TV cop show Dixon of Dock Green, were winning hegemony. In 1936 the Labour leadership started retaliating. In 1938 Willis and the national Youth League leadership pulled out and openly joined the Young Communist League.

The Youth Leagues were dormant during World War 2, but mushroomed in 1945/6. 250 branches were set up in the year after the end of the war, although they still had an official upper age limit of 21 and no national structure.

The Labour leadership gingerly conceded a national rally in 1949, and then a national conference and area federations in 1951. By then there were 806 Youth Leagues.

The Labour leadership worried about the influence of Bevanites and Trotskyists in the Youth Leagues, and soon started eliminating the national structures and squeezing the life out of the Youth Leagues. By 1959 the 806 Youth Leagues of 1951 had dwindled to 268.

A Labour right-winger analysing the causes of Labour defeat in the 1959 general election pointed to an "ageing Labour Party" dominated by "tired, grizzled men and grey-haired care-worn women". The right-wing Labour leadership decided to take a risk again. It relaunched the youth movement. The response was quick. The number of Young Socialist branches increased from 268 in 1959 to 608 by October 1960.

To the consternation of the Labour right wing, the relaunch had been just in time to tap into stirrings generated by the nuclear disarmament movement and the civil rights movement in the USA.

By 1964 a would-be Trotskyist faction — the Healyites — had won the majority of the Young Socialists (despite their faction having been officially banned years previously), and marched it out of the Labour Party. The Healyites would

soon degenerate into crazy sectarianism, and worse.

In the aftermath of the showdown between the Healyites and the Labour leadership, the youth movement dwindled. In 1966-70, many young people followed their elders out of the Labour Party in disgust.

The Labour leadership reconstituted the youth movement on a fairly liberal basis in 1968. It began to grow again from about 1970. Two decades of strange stillness followed, in which a sizeable Labour youth movement was controlled by the Militant faction (now the Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal). Unlike the Stalinists of the 1930s, the Bevanites of the early 1950s, or the Healyites of the early 1960s, the Militant people were seen as "safe" by the Labour leaders.

And so they were. The shutting-down of the fourth movement was prompted not by any initiative or rebellion from the youth, but by the fiasco and rout of Militant's control of Liverpool's Labour council in 1984-6. In the aftermath of that, keen to make an example of Militant in order to cow other Labour leftists, and spurred on by young graduates from anti-Militant factionalising in university Labour politics like Phil Woolas, the Labour leaders purged the Young Socialists.

Militant scarcely resisted. By 1990 the YS was down to 52 branches, and by 1993 to 18. There had been 581 at the peak, in 1985.

Then the Labour leadership decided — reluctantly, it seems, under pressure from Tom Watson and others — to set up a new youth movement. It was given few resources, and did not grow even in the years 1994-7, when Labour Party membership briefly swelled to 400,000 in a surge of hope of getting rid of the Tory government in office since 1979.

GESTURES

By 2001, a survey of 40 CLPs found only one which had more than four members under 30! The party leadership was nudged into some gestures to help Young Labour. From 2007 people under 27 could join the Labour Party for £1 a year. From 2008 Young Labour conference was allowed to elect the chair of the movement.

But the Labour Party's regional officials, who in the Blair/Brown years developed a viciousness beyond that of the right-wingers of the 1960s (and less kept in check by assertive and lively local Labour Parties), have been keen to control Young Labour branches.

The very "flexibility" of the new rules may be part of the problem. All previous youth movements organised primarily on a constituency basis, and constituency Young Labour groups won some help even from right-wing CLPs. Now Young Labour groups can be set up for single constituencies or much wider areas (so long as the regional official agrees).

The general result is Young Labour groups spanning vast areas ("Birmingham Young Labour", "Sheffield Young Labour", etc.), easily dominated by small groups of young careerists, and unattractive to other young people.

A regional official who can set up a "Young Labour" clique covering a vast area has "done his job", and can keep the group under close control. The "Young Labour" group has no organic relation with the rest of the Labour Party — not with CLPs, and not even with Young Labour conference (usually composed of young delegates from CLPs and trade unions, not from YL groups). Young Labour has no even nominally-democratic constitution of its own.

Labour Party rules ban Young Labour groups from holding lists of their own members, i.e. the Labour Party members under 27 in their area!

All previous Labour youth movements with any life had a strong social side to their activities. It was never just the "rambles and picnics", and singing round the piano, envisaged in 1919, but there was rambling; cycle outings; football, cricket, and other sports; dances; amateur theatre; and (believe it or not, a staple of the 1930s Youth Leagues) whilst



drives.

After 1959, many argued that the expansion of affordable commercial entertainment for young people, and the larger proportion of young people staying on in school, at college, or at university, with ready-made social activities there, made it impossible for a Labour youth movement to be attractive as a social thing.

In the early 1960s, however, at least in some areas (the most famous example is Wigan) where commercial entertainment was scanty, the Healyites were able to build big Young Socialist branches by organising discos.

If five-a-side football leagues can be successful recruiting devices for university Islamic societies, in the 21st century — and they can — there is no reason why similar things couldn't do the same job for Young Labour groups.

Both the first two Labour youth movements (1920s-30s, 1940s-50s) made their way against official restrictions greater than at present; the third (1960s) had no easy road either; and the fourth (1970s-80s) had its initial and decisive growth in a period when Labour was deeply discredited.

PUNISHMENT

The virtual absence of a Labour youth movement since the early 1990s is, you could say, fair punishment for the policies of Labour leaders over that period.

The punishment, however, hits the labour movement at large, denying it the influx of young activists it needs in order to flourish, more than it hits the Labour leaders.

There has been no other broadly leftish youth movement either — no sizeable, relatively permanent, movement in which young people can enter left-wing political debate and organising at whatever level they choose and with minimum preconditions.

Young people have been active, against the invasion of Iraq, in climate protests, and more, but mostly in one-off protests and very loose networks.

As a result, the "cadres" of leftish youth politics today — the people in a position to organise and hegemonise — are not people emerging from a process of debate and education in a structured movement, but the small minority of young "politics-as-a-career" people, the people who choose a "career" in or around politics through student-union sabbatical positions, posts in NGO and think-tanks, places as MPs' assistants, jobs as junior full-time officials for trade unions or as journalists.

The student and anti-cuts movements since 2010, and Jeremy Corbyn's victory as Labour leader, create new possibilities for Young Labour to revive, and an environment in some ways more favourable than the early 1930s, the early 1960s, or the early 1970s. Not ideal: but no previous Labour youth movement has grown in ideal conditions or times.

- Michelle Webb, *The Labour League of Youth*, Edwin Mellen Press, 2010

The land under your feet

John Cunningham reviews *Whose Land is Our Land? The use and abuse of Britain's forgotten acres* by Peter Hetherington

"We live on a small, overcrowded island", is a common enough refrain whether the subject under discussion is housing, road building, airport expansion or the arrival of refugees. As this book reveals this is a myth, partly perpetuated by those with a vested interest in maintaining their privileges and elite position with regard to the land.

The UK is not being "concreted over". In fact only 6% of the UK is urbanised. What agitates the author, and I hope his readers, is not so much the question of urban spread but who owns the land underneath the buildings, the moorlands, the meadows and pastures and so on? How is this land utilised? How are landowners held accountable? How much tax do they pay? Or, more to the point how much do they avoid?

For those readers who know little about the land this is a book you should read. Its slim 110 pages are packed with information — and revelations — about land ownership and finance in the UK.

Author and journalist Peter Hetherington travels far and wide, from the fields of Kent to the Scottish Highlands, and reveals a disturbing picture of land ownership that is hideously skewed in favour of the "landed gentry" and speculators. They pay little tax and exploit many loopholes such as inheritance tax avoidance. They don't actually work the land. They wield enormous power and influence, and are almost totally unaccountable.

The biggest private landowner in the UK is the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, who owns 240,000 acres mainly in Scotland. Just across the border, his cousin, the Duke of Northumberland owns 130,000 acres. And the Royal family directly owns 257,000 acres (this doesn't include the Crown Estate, which is semi-state owned and consists of 343,000 acres). These huge areas of land earn them millions every year. More recently the Royals and well-established aristos have been joined by "arrivistes" such as Danish textile billionaire Anders Holch Povlsen. Swathes of land are now being bought by speculators operating via offshore banks in Bermuda, Jersey, the Isle of Man and so on.

Hetherington poses the question: "do we use land for the benefit of all our citizens or for a privileged few"? As you read on, the answer becomes obvious.

Currently land prices are astronomical — between 2004 and 2014 the average price for arable land in England rose by 277%. This is one of the main reasons why house prices are so high, making it virtually impossible to buy a house un-

less you are well-heeled or can scrape together a crippling mortgage which may take a lifetime to pay off.

Land is a unique commodity. You can't "manufacture it", but you can just "sit" on it and do nothing while the value skyrockets. No-one, except wealthy landowners and speculators, benefits from this.

In Scotland, where land ownership has not changed substantially since the Highland Clearances, the situation is different from the rest of the UK. As part of its electoral programme, donning its "social democratic" hat, the SNP has pledged to introduce land reform. It will become easier for communities to buy land on big estates and tenant farmers will be able to buy their farms on favourable terms. These and other changes are welcome, but hardly the revolution some have hailed. Nicola Sturgeon has said that responsible landowners should be "valued and respected", which suggest a mild tinkering with the issues rather a robust head-on assault.

INTERVENTION

South of the border, however, the government seems to see land and land ownership as a utopia of laissez-faire and has almost totally abandoned the idea of intervention or planning: various regional and national "quangos" have been scrapped, the post of rural advocate has gone.

Our National Parks are being starved of finance, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is being sidelined, and only recently the government tried (but fortunately failed) to privatise the Forestry Commission.

Hetherington finishes his book by calling for an informed debate about the fate of rural Britain, for planning ahead, and the establishment of an agency that will develop an active land policy.

This is all well and good but the detail (in contrast to the rest of the book) is a bit thin. Specifically, he doesn't raise the question of a Land Value Tax (a tax on the unimproved value of land to be paid by the landowner) which would be a major restraint on land speculation as well as providing much needed funding for rural development. A Land Value Tax can trace its ancestry back to the American reformer Henry George and is supported by the Green Party, some Lib-Dems and has supporters in the Labour Party including Andy Burnham. Nor is it some pie-in-the-sky fantasy. In certain parts of the world e.g. New South Wales, Australia, a Land Value Tax is in operation. Some discussion of this tax and its implications would have helped raise the book beyond the limitations of journalistic exposé (in which it actually does a first class job).



Research into land ownership in Scotland shows how it is concentrated with just a few people.

Graphic from bit.ly/1j75VKA

The other missing element is how to break the power of the landowning elite. At times Hetherington seems to buy into the idea that really landowners are "decent chaps" and there are just a few "bad apples" spoiling it for everyone else. This simply won't do.

When introducing her Scottish land reforms Nicola Sturgeon remarked that she was "not waging class war"; well, it's about time somebody did.

We'll turn Shahrokh's death into a banner of workers' solidarity and unity

This statement was put out by workers' organisations in Iran after the suspicious death on 12 September of Shahrokh Zamani, a trade union activist who was in the fifth year of a prison sentence. Iranian friends are asking that it be circulated as widely as possible

Shahrokh Zamani, a brave and tireless fighter for the Iranian workers movement, has died in Gohar Dasht prison. The news was received by all with total disbelief and utter shock.

In our view, whatever reasons the authorities may give, the responsibility for his death lies completely with those who have imposed conditions of slavery on the workers of Iran and have taken away their rights to organise and struggle for a better life, and with those who throw honourable and valiant human beings such as Shahrokh Zamani into dungeons.

The shocking news of Shahrokh's death in jail, without any prior history of illness, is not the first news of such a loss of life of a prisoner – and, given the current conditions in the country's jails, will not be the last.

This untimely death will naturally appear suspicious to any unbiased person. But even without any such suspicions, the conditions in prisons – especially for worker activists and political prisoners – are already murderous enough, for a thousand and one reasons, from microwave torture to un-

suitable food, from inadequate sanitation to absence of medical care, from unhealthy living quarters to every kind of mental and psychological pressure.

Shahrokh Zamani had committed no crime, other than defending the rights of his fellow workers. He had no official position, he had not defrauded any one, he had not harmed anybody and he was not a partner to any thief or highway robber. He was a building worker and a member of the Committee for the Establishment of Independent Trade Unions, a member of the co-ordinating committee for restarting the Paint Workers' Syndicate. He was an honorary member of Paint Workers' Syndicate of Alborz and the Central Province, and its founding mentor.

BRAVE

Shahrokh was thrown into jail in 2011 for defending workers rights, but for such a brave fighter, prison did not mean an end to struggles.

In his almost five years of imprisonment, from his two-man cell at Gohar Dasht prison, he never stopped until his last breath to struggle and fight for just causes. Jails, courts, repression, and pressure from the security forces and jailers could not silence Shahrokh. With his unrivalled braveness and steadfastness, and without an iota of self promotion, Shahrokh was a real symbol of Iranian workers' resistance

and struggle for liberation from oppression and exploitation.

The death of Shahrokh is an irreplaceable loss for his family and friends and for the workers' movement as a whole. We feel sincere sorrow for this great loss and declare our sympathies with his family, friends, his fellow prisoners and workers all over the country. But despite this unbearable pain, we will not retreat into our sorrow and we will turn his death into the banner of workers' solidarity and unity.

Long live workers' unity and solidarity!

We salute you Shahrokh Zamani!

Signed by:

Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Workers' Syndicate;
Paint Workers' syndicate of Alborz Province;
The Centre for the Defence of Workers Rights;
The Committee for the Establishment of Independent Trade Unions;

The Co-ordinating Committee for Establishing Independent Workers' Organisations;

The Co-ordinating Committee for Restarting the Tehran Paint Workers' Syndicate;

The Free Trade Union of Workers in Iran.

• Translation by Revolutionary Socialism — published on People & Nature: peopleandnature.wordpress.com

Time to organise

The Labour Party has set up a petition against the Trade Union Bill which has gathered 400,000 signatures in just a few days.

There is a mood to fight to Trade Union Bill, which should be mobilised. Campaigners with the London Right to Strike group meet today (Tuesday 22 September) to plan their next protest and street stalls. We encourage activists around the country to do the same.

On Saturday 3 October Right to Strike will hold an open steering committee meeting in Manchester (bit.ly/1MnPAS). We invite all branches who have

affiliated to the campaign to come. The meeting will also be open to all, regardless of if your branch has affiliated.

On Sunday 4 October Right to Strike will have a bloc on the demonstration at Tory Party conference. We will assemble from 12 on the corner of Booth Street and Oxford Road, next to the Royal Northern College of Music.

Please join us with your union banners and encourage others from your union branch to march with us.

- More info: righttostrike.co.uk

Lessons from Australia

By Martin Thomas

For the current campaign against the Tories' trade union Bill there are lessons to be learned from the Australian unions' campaign against the anti-union legislation of John Howard's Liberal government in Australia.

Howard introduced two new laws from 2005. WorkChoices aimed gradually to shift the entire Australian workforce from regulation by union-negotiated and legally-enforceable "awards", which have dominated Australian industrial relations for over a hundred years, to individual contracts. It was more drastic, in long-term implications, than anything Margaret Thatcher pushed through in Britain.

The Building and Construction Industry Improvement Act set up a special industrial police, the ABCC, for the construction industry, and made trade unionists liable to fines or jail for such things as insisting on a right to silence when summoned to be questioned by the ABCC about their union comrades' activities.

Australia's unions launched a big and well-organised campaign against the laws. There were stickers and posters everywhere, meetings, and large demonstrations on working days.

That union campaign was probably decisive in defeating the Liberals at the November 2007 federal election and returning a Labor government.

The unions also formulated a good, radical set of demands which they said they'd fight to get the Labor government to implement.

But then things went bad. Once Labor was elected, the union leaders went quiet on their demands. The unions have about 50% of the vote in every state conference of the Australian Labor Party, and thus about a 50% say in the federal conference; but even the left unions have done nothing to use that vote to push the demands the unions developed in 2006-7.

Labor repealed WorkChoices and the BCII Act, and since then even right-wing Liberals plead that they have no intention of restoring WorkChoices. Union agreements remain central to industrial relations.

But strikes or industrial action remain unlawful in Australia at all times unless the Fair Work Commission authorises a union to ballot over the terms of a new agreement, after the previous agreement has expired, and when the union has been "genuinely trying to reach agreement".

Many other restrictions on unions survive from Howard's legislation.

So, legislation can be defeated. A strong campaign against legislation can not only defeat it but bring down the government.

But unless the unions use their political clout to ensure a political alternative, their campaign victory will be only a quarter-victory.

No to the "easycouncil"

Workers facing outsourcing from London borough of Barnet council will strike on Wednesday 7 October.

The dispute involves social workers, coach escorts, drivers, occupational therapists, schools catering staff, education welfare officers, library workers, children centre workers, street cleaning and refuse workers, all of whom face outsourcing under Barnet's "easycouncil" model which will see the number of directly employed staff fall to less than 300.

Barnet's plans mean council budgets will be cut 40% by 2020. As well as the services already planned to be outsourced, Barnet announced last week that the Meals on Wheels service will cease on 1 April 2016.

On 2 October the council will publish a report into the future of the Library service, it is expected this report will seek to reduce the staff budget by 68%. Such cuts will devastate a library service which has already faced several rounds

of cuts in the last five years.

Barnet council has already privatised social care for adults with disabilities, housing options, parking services, revenues and benefits, IT services, HR and payroll, pensions, health and safety, finance, estates, property services, procurement service, environmental health, planning, building control, Hendon cemetery and crematorium, highways services, trading standards and licensing, legal services, registrars and nationality services, CCTV, the music trust, public health and mortuary services.

COMMISSIONING

They now seek to privatise early years children's centres, library services, adults and community services, street scene services, education and skills, and school meals.

Barnet council has branded this final phase as becoming the "Commissioning Council" — they aim to become the first council to solely function to



Barnet workers were visited on their picket line by Jeremy Corbyn in July

commission privatised services.

Unison Branch Secretary John Burgess said: "Our members want to work for the Council, they want to be directly accountable to the residents of Barnet. Our members don't want to work for an employer which will have to place the shareholders' legal demands before local residents' needs. Our members don't want to work for an employer which uses zero hours contracts. Our members don't want to work for an employer which will not pay the London Living Wage as a basic minimum. Our members don't want to

work for an employer which won't allow their colleagues to belong to their Pension Scheme, and our members don't want to work for an employer which will take jobs out of the borough."

Workers will be on picket lines at Barnet House from 7am, Mill Hill Depot from 6am, and East Finchley Library from 9am.

A rally will be held outside Barnet House at 12pm and all are encouraged to attend and show support.

- Messages of solidarity to: john.burgess@barnetunison.org.uk

100 days on strike

By Charlotte Zalens

Strikers at the National Gallery, London, will mark 100 days on strike on Thursday 24 September by releasing 100 balloons in Trafalgar Square.

The event will form part of a day of action against the privatisation of gallery services, and in support of strikers, and will involve a rally in Trafalgar Square at 1pm.

On Friday 2 October at 5.30pm National Gallery strikers will host a "poetry on the picket line" event, with poets performing on the picket line in support of the strike.

PCS has now secured talks with the new gallery director and hopes to make progress, but pressure will need to be kept up to make the gallery back down on privatisation.

Tube talks continue

By Ollie Moore

Talks between Tube unions and London Underground bosses are ongoing, as disputes over rostering, staffing levels, pay, and other issues continue.

Strikes in July and August forced a series of concessions from the company, including a commitment that station staff recently recruited on fixed-term contracts will be retained permanently, and a promise

that new rosters will retain existing levels of weekends off for most staff. However, activists are urging unions to tell the company that the clock is ticking. Rank-and-file bulletin *Tubeworker* said: "No-one wants talks to plod along indefinitely. If LU appears unlikely to concede much more than it has currently, we need to either give up, or step up.

"We believe we should do the latter!"

- For regular updates, see workersliberty.org/twblog

Other industrial news

Camden parking wardens strike for 7 days, chemical plant workers fight redundancies, probation workers fight pay freeze

bit.ly/Reports2209

Win on pay in Bromley

Refuse workers in the London borough of Bromley have secured an increased pay offer after strikes.

Members of Unite struck for three days on 24 August and 3 and 4 September over a 1% pay offer from contractor Veolia. Following talks this has been upped to 2%, backdated to April 2015, which has been accepted by the workers. Unite says they also gained significant increases in sick pay.

Unite national officer for local government Fiona Farmer said: "It is 'a smell the coffee' moment for those outsourcing companies which view local government contracts as a massive



money-spinner at the expense of those that actually do the work on behalf of the local communities."

Refuse services in Bromley were outsourced as part of Bromley's plans to become a "commissioning council" in a similar way to Barnet.

Privatisation is continuing with parks services recently privatised and other services due to be sold off soon.



Solidarity

No 377

23 September
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Private sector housing misery worsens

By Pete Gilman

Lisa was forced to live in one room, for which she paid £200 a week, and shared a bathroom and toilet with six other tenants.

The roof leaked and when it rained water came through the electrics. She had no choice. Lack of social housing and the growing refusal of private landlords to accept tenants on housing benefit meant it was that or the street.

There are vast numbers in Lisa's situation. No one knows how many.

According to a recent study conducted by the Centre for Housing and Planning Research at Cambridge University, 83,000 16-25 year olds have been forced to "sleep rough" over the last year, while a Ministry of Justice report states more than 43,000 families were evicted in the twelve months to June this year, the highest number of evictions ever recorded.

Vast numbers of tenants in the private rented sector have suffered abuse and harassment at the hands of private landlords including threats, physical assault, the

cutting off of gas, water or electricity, and the destruction of their possessions. The *Guardian* (2 September) reported the results of a survey estimating that 125,000 tenants in the private sector had suffered some form of abuse.

It is normal for private tenancies to be short term, sometimes no more than six months, which leads to stress, lack of stability and regular moves. For families this means the continuous disruption of children's education. There are now a rapidly growing (and unknown) number of children who have never completed a full year in any one school.

RENT

Tenants in the private sector pay extortionate rents, especially in London, have little or no security of tenure, and the property is often in an appalling state of disrepair.

It is the Tories' intention to force more and more people into the private rented sector, irrespective of the suffering and misery this causes. They want a bonanza for the private landlord.

Tory housing policies have led to the worst housing crisis since the war. There is a massive housing shortage, especially social housing. Less than 50% of what is needed is being built and over 80% of what is actually built is "luxury housing."

REGULATION

To solve the crisis requires a complete reversal of Tory housing policy and the complete regulation of the private rented sector.

A regulatory body needs to be created with real teeth and legal powers of enforcement to oversee the entire private housing sector, and especially to deal with "slum landlords".

We need a charter of rights for private sector tenants along the lines of "The Regulation of the Private Rented Sector Bill" sponsored by Jeremy Corbyn, which includes replacing short term tenancies with long term tenancies, especially for families with children.

The Bill also requires all private sector landlords to go onto a central registry. This involves them signing

up to a specific code of conduct towards their tenants. Failure to register, or failure to comply with that code of conduct, should lead to a compulsory purchase orders on properties, heavy fines, or in extreme cases confiscation or even imprisonment.

REFUSE

Some landlord companies (and the finance companies behind them) have indicated that they will resist such regulation.

If they are not allowed to increase rents to whatever levels they see fit, or are made to grant security of tenure to tenants, they say will withdraw their property from the market and deliberately increase homelessness. The landlord equivalent of a strike, but a "strike of capital".

When landlords refuse to comply with regulation or organise their "strike of capital" they must be given a clear choice — comply or be taken into public ownership.

Only with these measures can we deal with the horrors and the scandals of the private rented sector.



March against evictions

By Monty Shield

Homelessness is on the rise in London, and yet the Carpenters Estate, east London, is the site of four hundred empty homes.

The responsibility for this injustice lies in the hands of Newham Council's Labour Mayor Robin Wales, who is disregarding both his moral and statutory responsibility to house these people.

Focus E15 Mums organised a "march against evictions" on 19 September, also the anniversary of their campaign.

It was a lively demonstration, supported by over fifty groups, and

drew hundreds of protesters, colourful banners and a variety of musical instruments.

The demonstration raised political slogans about the appalling stance of Newham Council on the issues of homelessness. As well as raising local concerns, Focus E15 Mums have also been promoting a wider narrative which links these issues to circumstances nationally, pointing out that across the country 126 people are evicted every day!

The application of bottom-up pressure on councils, such as that maintained by Focus E15 Mothers, is crucial for combatting gentrification.

Learn about the history of Trotskyism

Uniquely, this new book traces the decisive political divisions within the broadly-defined Trotskyist movement by presenting key texts from both sides of the political debates as they happened.

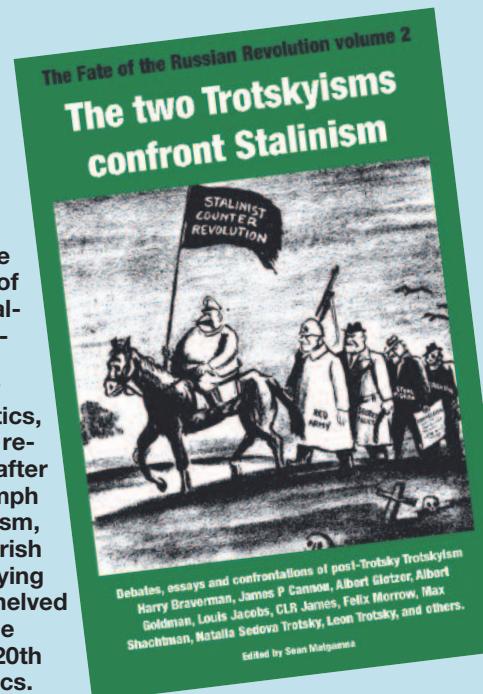
The book's overall thesis, argued in a substantial introduction, is that by the late 1940s there were two Trotskyisms.

They had separated, fundamentally, through their different responses to events neither "side" expected: the transition of the

Stalinist USSR from unstable beleaguered semi-outlaw state to a continent-besetting world power, stably self-reproducing at least for some decades to come.

The other issues were many, but, so the book argues, mostly linked to that fundamental division. They included different conceptions of what a revolutionary socialist party should be and do, and what Marxism is and how it is developed.

"Orthodox Trotskyism"



Buy your copy now! Join a local reading group

North London reading group, Wood Green, every Friday at 6.30pm from 2 October. Call 07784641808 for details of venue.

Details of other reading groups will be online at thetwotrotskyisms.org along with other resources and articles.

Buy your copy online at bit.ly/TwoTrots